

Glossary of Legislative Terms

Act

A bill passed by the Legislature and enacted into law.

Adjournment

Termination of a meeting, occurring at the close of each legislative day upon the completion of business, with the hour and day of the next meeting being set prior to adjournment.

Adjournment Sine Die

Final adjournment of the Legislature; regular sessions of the Legislature, and any special session not previously adjourned, are adjourned sine die at midnight on November 30 of each even-numbered year.

Analysis of the Budget Bill

The Legislative Analyst's comprehensive examination of the Governor's budget, available to legislators and the public about six weeks after the Governor submits the budget to the Legislature.

Appropriation

The amount of money made available for expenditure by a specific entity for a specific purpose, from the General Fund or other designated state fund or account.

Appropriations Limit

A limitation in the California Constitution on the maximum amount of tax proceeds that state or local government may appropriate in a fiscal year. The limit is based on 1986-87 fiscal year appropriations, and is adjusted annually.

Approved by the Governor

Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the Legislature.

Archives

Refers to both location and contents of public records kept by the Secretary of State, including copies of all measures considered at each session, journals, committee reports, and documents of historic value.

Assembly

The house of the California Legislature consisting of 80 members, elected from districts determined on the basis of population. Two Assembly districts are situated within each Senate district.

Assistant Chief Clerk

Performs the duties of the Chief Clerk of the Assembly in his or her absence.

Author

Member of the Legislature who introduces a legislative measure.

Bicameral

Refers to a legislature consisting of two houses (see Unicameral).

Bill

A proposed law, introduced during a session for consideration by the Legislature, and identified numerically in order of presentation; also, a reference that may include joint and concurrent resolutions and constitutional amendments.

Bill Analysis

A document prepared by committee and/or floor analysis staff prior to hearing the bill in that committee or on the floor of the Assembly or Senate. It explains how a bill would change current law and sometimes identifies major interest groups in support or opposition.

Blue Pencil

The California Constitution grants the Governor "line item veto" authority to reduce or eliminate any item of appropriation in any bill including the Budget Bill. Years ago the Governor used an editor's blue pencil for the task.

Bond Bill (general obligation bonds)

A bill authorizing the sale of state general obligation bonds to finance specified projects or activities. Subsequent to enactment, a general obligation bond bill must be approved by the voters.

Budget

Proposed expenditure of state moneys for the next fiscal year, presented by the Governor in January of each year for consideration by the Legislature; compiled by the Department of Finance, in conjunction with state agency and department heads.

Budget Act

The Budget Bill after it has been enacted into law.

Casting Vote

The deciding vote the Lieutenant Governor may cast in the case of a tie vote in the Senate.

Caucus

(1) A closed meeting of legislators of one's own party.

(2) Any group of legislators who coalesce formally because of their common interest in specific issues.

Chapter

When a bill has been passed by the Legislature and enacted into law, the Secretary of State assigns the bill a "chapter number" such as "Chapter 123, Statutes of 1992," which is subsequently used to refer to the measure in place of the bill number.

Codes

Bound volumes of law organized by subject matter. The code sections to be added, amended, or repealed by a bill are identified in the title of the bill.

Committee of the Whole

The Assembly or Senate meeting as a committee for the purpose of receiving information.

Companion Bill

An identical bill introduced in the other house. This procedure is far more common in Congress than in the California Legislature.

Concurrence

The approval by the house of origin of a bill as amended in the other house. If the author is unwilling to move the bill as amended by the other house, the author requests "non-concurrence" in the bill and asks for the formation of a conference committee.

Concurrent Resolution

A measure introduced in one house that, if approved, must be sent to the other house for approval. The Governor's signature is not required. These measures usually involve the internal business of the Legislature.

Conferees

Members of a conference committee.

Conference Committee

Usually composed of three legislators (two voting in the majority on the disputed issue, one voting in the minority) from each house, a conference committee meets in public session to forge one version of a bill when the house of origin has refused to concur in amendments to the bill adopted by the other house. For the bill to pass, the conference committee version must be approved by both Assembly and Senate. Assembly conferees are chosen by the Speaker; Senate conferees are chosen by the Senate Committee on Rules.

Confirm

The process whereby one or both houses approve the Governor's appointments to executive offices, departments, boards, and commissions.

Constitutional Amendment

A resolution proposing a change to the California Constitution. It may be presented by the Legislature or by initiative, and is adopted upon voter approval at a statewide election.

Convene

To assemble a meeting. Each house of the Legislature usually convenes twice a week.

Daily File

Publication produced by each house for each day the house is in session. The publication provides information about bills to be considered at upcoming committee hearings and bills that are eligible for consideration during the next scheduled floor session. Pursuant to Joint Rule 62(a), any bill to be heard in committee must be noticed in the Daily File for four days, including weekend days. The Daily File also contains useful information about committee assignments and the legislative calendar.

Daily History

Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after each house has met. The History lists specific actions taken on legislation. Each measure acted upon in that house the previous day is listed in numerical order.

Daily Journal

Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after a floor session. Contains roll call votes on bills heard in policy committees and bills considered on the floor, and other official action taken by the body. Any official messages from the Governor are also included. A Member may seek approval to publish a letter in the Journal on a specific legislative matter. At the end of a legislative session, the Journals are bound.

Desk

The long desk in front of the presiding officer's rostrum where much of the clerical work of the body is conducted. Also, a generic term for the staff and offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the Assembly.

Digest

Prepared by the Legislative Counsel, it summarizes the effect of a proposed bill on current law. It appears on the first page of the printed bill.

District

The area of the state represented by a legislator. Each district is determined by population and is designated by a number. There are 40 Senate districts and 80 Assembly districts.

District Bill

A bill that generally affects only the district of the Member of the Legislature who introduced the bill.

Do Pass

Motion that, if adopted by a committee, moves a bill to the floor or to the next committee.

Do Pass As Amended

Committee motion that a bill be passed with the recommendation that the floor adopt specified amendments.

Double Joint

Amendments to a bill providing that the amended bill does not override the provisions of another bill, where both bills propose to amend the same section of law (see Chapter Out).

Double Refer

Legislation recommended for referral to two policy committees for hearing rather than one. Both committees must approve the measure to keep it moving in the process. Typically used for sensitive subject areas that transcend the jurisdiction of one policy committee. Bill referrals are made by the Assembly and Senate Committees on Rules for their respective houses.

Extraordinary Session

A special legislative session called by the Governor by proclamation to address only those

issues specified in the proclamation; also referred to as a special session. Measures introduced in these sessions are numbered chronologically with a lower case "x" after the number (for example, AB 28x).

File Number

The number assigned to a measure in the Assembly or Senate Daily File. The file number changes each day as bills move on or off the Daily File. File numbers are assigned to measures on second and third reading; in conference; unfinished business (a bill amended in the other house and awaiting concurrence in amended form); and Governor's appointments. Legislation is taken up on the Assembly or Senate floor in chronological order according to file number. Items considered on the floor are ordinarily referred to by file number.

First Reading

Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. The first reading of a bill occurs when it is introduced.

Fiscal Bill

Generally, a measure that contains an appropriation of funds or requires a state agency to incur additional expense. The Legislative Counsel's designation of whether a bill is a fiscal bill appears at the end of the Digest found in the printed bill. Fiscal bills must be heard by the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees in addition to the policy committees in each house.

Fiscal Committee

The Appropriations Committee in the Assembly and the Appropriations Committee in the Senate, to which each fiscal bill is referred upon approval by policy committee. If the fiscal committee approves a bill, it then moves to the floor.

Fiscal Deadline

The date on the legislative calendar by which all bills with fiscal effect must have been taken up in a policy committee and referred to a fiscal committee. Any fiscal bill missing the deadline is considered "dead" unless it receives a rule waiver allowing further consideration.

Floor

(1) The Assembly or Senate Chamber.

(2) The term used to describe the location of a bill or the type of session, connoting action to be taken by the house. Matters may be said to be "on the floor."

Four-Day File Notice

As set forth in Joint Rule 62(a), the requirement that each bill in the first committee of reference be noticed in the Daily File for four days prior to the committee hearing at which it will be considered. At a second or subsequent committee of reference, a notice of only two days is required.

Germaneness

Referring to the legislative rule requirement that an amendment to a bill be relevant to the

subject matter of the bill as introduced. The Legislative Counsel may be asked to opine on germaneness, but the matter is subject to final determination by the full Assembly, or the Senate Committee on Rules.

Governor's Budget

The spending plan submitted by the Governor in January for the next fiscal year (see Budget).

Handbook

The 3" x 5-3/4" hardbound edition of "California Legislature" published for each two-year legislative session. Contains indexed versions of the Assembly, Senate, and Joint Rules; biographies of members; and other useful information. Published by the Chief Clerk of the Assembly and Secretary of the Senate.

Hearing

A committee meeting convened for the purpose of gathering information on a subject or considering specific legislative measures.

Held in Committee

Status of a bill that fails to receive sufficient affirmative votes to pass out of committee.

Hijack

Adoption of amendments that delete the contents of a bill and insert provisions on a different subject (see Germaneness). May occur with or without the author's permission.

House

In California, refers to either the Senate or the Assembly.

Initiative

A legislative proposal to change statutory law or the California Constitution, submitted directly by members of the public rather than by the Legislature, and requiring voter approval at a statewide election. To qualify for a statewide ballot, a statutory initiative must receive signatures equal to 5 percent, and a constitutional amendment initiative must receive signatures equal to 8 percent, of the votes for all candidates for Governor at the last gubernatorial election.

Interim

The period of time between the end of a legislative year and the beginning of the next legislative year. The legislative year ends on August 31 in even-numbered years and in mid-September in odd-numbered years.

Joint Committee

A committee composed of equal numbers of Assembly Members and Senators.

Joint Resolution

A resolution expressing the Legislature's opinion about a matter within the jurisdiction of the federal government, which is forwarded to Congress for its information. Requires the approval of both Assembly and Senate but does not require signature of the Governor.

Joint Session

The Assembly and Senate meeting together, usually in the Assembly Chamber. The purpose ordinarily is to receive special information such as the Governor's State of the State address

Legislative Advocate

An individual (commonly known as a lobbyist) engaged to present to legislators the views of a group or organization. The law requires formal registration with the Secretary of State if an individual's lobbying activity exceeds 25 contacts with decision makers in a two-month period.

Legislative Analyst

The Legislative Analyst, who is a legislative appointee, and his or her staff provide thorough, nonpartisan analysis of the budget submitted by the Governor; also analyze the fiscal impact of other legislation and prepare analyses of ballot measures published in the state ballot pamphlet.

Legislative Counsel

The Legislative Counsel (who is appointed jointly by both houses) and his or her legal staff are responsible for, among other things, drafting all bills and amendments, preparing the Digest for each bill, providing legal opinions, and representing the Legislature in legal proceedings.

Lower House

The Assembly.

Majority Floor Leader

Assembly Member who is an issues and political strategist for the Assembly's majority party, second in command to the Assembly Speaker. Elected by the members of the Assembly's majority party.

Majority Leader

Senator who is an issues and political strategist for the Senate's majority party, second in command to the Senate President pro Tempore. Elected by the members of the Senate's majority party.

Majority Whip

One of the members of the majority party's leadership team in the Assembly or Senate; responsible for monitoring legislation and securing votes for legislation on the floor.

May Revision

Occurring in early May, the updated estimate of revenues and expenditures that replaces the estimates contained in the Governor's budget submitted in January.

Measure

A bill, resolution, or constitutional amendment that is considered by the Legislature.

Minority Floor Leader

The highest-ranking minority party post in each house; chief policy and political strategist for the minority party.

Minority Whip

One of the members of the minority party's leadership team in the Assembly or Senate; responsible for monitoring legislation and securing votes for legislation on the floor.

Nonfiscal Bill

A measure not having specified financial impact on the state and, therefore, not required to be heard in an Assembly or Senate fiscal committee as it moves through the legislative process. Nonfiscal bills are subject to different legislative calendar deadlines than fiscal bills.

Officers

Those Members and employees of the Legislature who are elected by the membership of each house at the beginning of each session to perform specific functions on behalf of the house. Assembly officers include the Speaker, Speaker pro Tempore, Chief Clerk, and Sergeant-at-Arms. Senate officers include the President pro Tempore, Secretary of the Senate, and Sergeant-at-Arms.

On Call

A roll call vote in a committee or an Assembly or Senate floor session that has occurred but has not yet been concluded or formally announced. Members may continue to vote or change their votes as long as a measure remains "on call." Calls are usually placed at the request of a bill's author in an effort to gain votes. Calls can be lifted by request any time during the committee hearing or floor session, but cannot be carried over into the next legislative day.

On File

A bill on the second or third reading file of the Assembly or Senate Daily File.

Override

Enactment of a bill despite the Governor's veto, by a vote of two thirds of the members of each house (27 votes in the Senate and 54 votes in the Assembly).

Pass on File

A bill is taken up during a floor session by its author or floor manager according to its order in the Assembly or Senate Daily File. An author may choose to "pass on file," thus temporarily giving up his or her opportunity to take up a measure on the floor.

President Pro Tempore of the Senate

(literally: for the time) Highest-ranking member of the Senate; also chairs the Senate Committee on Rules. Elected by Senators at the beginning of each two-year session.

Previous Question

If a Member seeks to cut off all further debate on a measure, he or she may call the previous question to seek to compel the body to vote immediately on the issue.

Principal Coauthor

A Member who is so designated on a bill or other measure, indicating that the Member is a primary supporter of the measure.

Privilege of the Floor

Permission given, by the presiding officer, to view the proceedings from the floor of the Chamber, rather than from the gallery. Members request that permission on behalf of constituents or other guests.

Reading

Presentation of a bill before the house by reading its number, author, and title. A bill is on either first, second, or third reading until it is passed by both houses.

Reapportionment

Revising the allocation of congressional seats based on census results. Also used to refer to redistricting (the revision of legislative district boundaries) to reflect census results.

Recess

(1) An official pause in a committee hearing or floor session that halts the proceedings for a period of time but does not have the finality of adjournment.

(2) A break of more than four days in the regular session schedule such as the "Easter recess."

Referendum

The method, used by members of the public, by which a measure adopted by the Legislature may be submitted to the electorate for a vote. A referendum petition must be signed by electors equal in number to 5 percent of the votes for all candidates for Governor at the last gubernatorial election.

Rules

Principles formally adopted to govern the operation of either or both houses. These include Standing Rules of the Assembly, Standing Rules of the Senate, and Joint Rules of the Senate and Assembly.

Second Reading

Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Second reading occurs after a bill has been reported to the floor from committee.

Second Reading File

The portion of the Daily File that lists measures that have been reported out of committee and are ready for consideration on the floor. Measures stay on the second reading file for one day before moving to the third reading portion of the File.

Secretary of the Senate

A Senate employee serving as principal parliamentarian and record keeper for the Senate, elected by Senators at the beginning of each two-year session. The Senate Secretary and his or her staff are responsible for publishing the Senate daily and weekly publications.

Section

Ordinarily, a portion of the California Codes or other statutory law; alternatively, a portion of

the text of a bill. The text of code sections is set forth in bills as proposed to be amended, repealed, or added.

Senate

The house of the California Legislature consisting of 40 members elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, one-half of whom are elected or re-elected every two years for four-year terms.

Speaker

The presiding officer of the Assembly, elected by the membership of the Assembly at the beginning of the two-year session. This is the highest-ranking Member of the Assembly.

Speaker Pro Tempore

Member, appointed to this office by the Speaker, who presides over a floor session of the Assembly at the request of the Speaker.

Spot Bill

A bill that proposes non-substantive amendments to a code section in a particular subject; introduced to assure that a bill will be available, subsequent to the deadline to introduce bills, for revision by amendments that are germane to the subject of the bill.

State Mandate

State legislative enactment or administrative regulation that mandates a new program or higher level of service on the part of a local government, the costs of which are required by the California Constitution to be reimbursed.

Statutes

Enacted bills, which are chaptered by the Secretary of State in the order in which they become law.

Stop the Clock

The term used to describe the process of continuing legislative business after the passage of a deadline imposed by legislative rule.

Subcommittee

A subgroup of a full committee, appointed to perform work on one or more functions of the committee.

Tax Levy

Any bill that imposes, repeals, or materially alters a state tax. The Legislative Counsel indicates in the title and Digest of the bill whether the bill is a tax levy.

Third House

Collective reference to lobbyists (see Legislative Advocates).

Third Reading

Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Third reading occurs when the measure is about to be taken up on the floor of either house for final passage.

Third Reading Analysis

A summary of a measure that is ready for floor consideration. Describes most recent amendments and contains information regarding how Members voted on the measure when it was heard in committee. Senate floor analyses also list support or opposition by interest groups and government agencies.

Third Reading File

That portion of the Daily File listing the bills that are ready to be taken up for final passage.

Title

The material on the first page of a bill that identifies the provisions of law affected by the bill and the subject matter of the bill.

Two-Thirds Vote

In the Assembly, 54; in the Senate, 27. Required, for example, for urgency measures and most measures making appropriations from the General Fund.

Upper House

The Senate.

Urgency Measure

A bill affecting the public peace, health, or safety, containing an urgency clause, and requiring a two-thirds vote for passage. An urgency bill becomes effective immediately upon enactment.

Veto

The Governor's formal rejection of a measure passed by the Legislature. The Governor may also exercise a line item veto, whereby the amount of an appropriation is reduced or eliminated, while the rest of the bill is approved (see Blue Pencil). A veto may be overridden by a two-thirds vote in each house.